



For immediate release
September 25, 2020

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New Daily Cases of COVID-19 Shatters Record in Lewis and Clark County

Helena – Lewis and Clark Public Health reported at least 27 new COVID-19 cases on September 24, marking the highest daily number of new COVID-19 cases since the first local case was reported on March 20. The prior single day high in new local cases was 10 individuals on August 3. Yesterday's increase marks a 170 percent rise over those numbers and represents almost a 10 percent increase in the total number of local cases since the beginning of the pandemic.

Some of the new cases in the county were tied to individuals in congregate settings, those places where several people reside, meet or gather near one another and interact. These interactions can last for a few minutes up to an extended period, providing the virus that causes COVID-19 a good opportunity to infect multiple people in a single setting. Examples of congregate settings include daycares, schools, and detention centers. Some of the new infections were related to other known cases, and at least three cases involved a teacher and two students.

County Health Officer and Director of Public Health, Drenda Niemann, urged everyone to stay home if they are exhibiting signs of COVID-19 and to get tested.

"With the current increase in local cases, it is more important than ever that both employers and employees recognize the importance of staying home from work when you are sick," Niemann said. "We ask that employers have plans in place to accommodate the absence of sick employees so they can stay home without the added fear and impact of lost wages," she added. "And, we ask that sick employees take staying home from work seriously in order to avoid outbreaks within businesses and congregate settings."

COVID-19 symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus and include fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea. Also, be aware of emergency warning signs of severe COVID-19 disease. Individuals showing any of the following signs or symptoms should seek emergency medical care immediately: trouble breathing, persistent pressure or pain in the chest, new confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, or bluish lips or face coloring.

Niemann pleaded for the community not to lose focus during the fight against COVID-19.

"We know our community is tired, and we know you are all experiencing COVID-fatigue," Niemann said. "We understand the desire to get back to normal life, including getting back to work. The list of COVID-19 symptoms is comprehensive and growing. So, please, if you feel sick, even if you think it's just a routine cold, protect yourself and our community by staying home from work," she added.

Notification of most of the new cases was received by Lewis and Clark Public Health yesterday evening; therefore, the official county dashboard reporting these values indicates just seven cases added Thursday. Lewis

and Clark Public Health anticipates the dashboard will be updated to reflect the unidentified cases by Saturday. For the most current available data on local COVID-19 cases, view the Local COVID-19 Decision Making Dashboard at www.lccountymt.gov/health/covid-19/local-covid-19-decision-making-dashboard.html.

Preventing and controlling local COVID-19 is dependent on personal responsibility and individual choices that residents of our county can make to protect our community. Lewis and Clark Public Health continues to urge people to do the right thing to protect our community, practice what has been learned over the last few months, such as physical distancing, wearing a face covering, avoiding large gatherings, washing hands, and sanitizing surfaces to protect ourselves and others.

If you have questions, please call Lewis and Clark Public Health at 457-8900.

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